

School-Family cooperation: creation of a new institution

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Abstract: The level of children's academic, social, emotional and behavioral ability can be encouraged by focusing on the dynamic influence of relationships between family and school systems. Creative parent-teacher collaboration is an attitude and not just a pursued activity, where everyone interacts in a coordinated manner based on a student-centered philosophy in order to enhance students' learning opportunities, educational progress and school success. In particular, this paper will summarize the basic, theoretical models that describe school-family cooperation and will propose, mainly, practices of strengthening school-family cooperation both at a preventive level and at an intervening one with regard to dealing with difficulties.

Keywords: models, parental involvement, practices, actions

1. Introduction

In recent years, a number of key factors have given a new, great impetus to the investigation of the family-school relationship for the development of collaborative and effective forms of communication (Penteri & Petrogiannis, 2013). Among the main ones are the demands of the competitive global economy that the quality of education be improved, the gap in the performance of children from different socio-economic environments, the radical changes in the family structure, the democratization of the operation and management of schools, the request for the opening of the school community to the local community and the parents as well as for ensuring the "continuity" between the basic frameworks in which the child participates and acts.

The school and the family are two institutions that significantly influence the psycho-pedagogical development of the child. Therefore, the constructive cooperation between the two institutions seems to be necessary, since they coexist in the life of the child for several years and have a decisive influence on the development of his personality and his subsequent development as an adult (Gliou-Christodoulou, 2005). The participation of the family in the modern school is a determining factor of quality and effective learning both in the school community and outside it (Sakellariou, 2008).

2. Terminology

The concept of the terms "parental involvement", "parental cooperation" defines the content of school-family relations.

Parental involvement is associated with a limited and guided involvement of the parent in the school's educational environment and makes him / her a "spectator". The activities that are part of the "parental involvement" mainly concern the well-understood interest of the child of each parent separately. In contrast to parental involvement, parents and school interact in the same space responsibly. In this case, parents have the opportunity to focus their interest on the interest of the whole school and all the children who attend it (Munn, 1993).

In contrast to the term parental involvement, the use of the term alliance / cooperation seems to have a greater impact, as it shapes the meaning of a substantially equivalent / dialectical relationship and emphasizes the coordination of forces between the contexts in which the child participates in order to promote and develop his learning. (Penteri & Petrogiannis, 2013; Kondakou, 2019).

3. Typology

The typologies that describe the various forms of parental involvement in school approach the issue from a variety of perspectives.

The earliest typology was proposed by Fullan (Fullan, 1982), who suggested four types of links between school and family: (a) the family contribution to teaching the child at home, (b) the family contribution to teaching within school, (c) the offer of voluntary work on behalf of the family within the school and (d) parents' involvement in the school administration.

Tomlinson (Tomlinson & Ross, 1991) studying the prevailing practices of British schools until then proposed a different typology, which consists of the following four types: (a) the exchange of information between school and family, (b) the personal involvement of parents in educational matters concerning their child

and his / her attendance at school; (c) their informal involvement in matters of school administration and management; (d) the formal involvement of parents in the educational administration and policy-making.

Greenwood and Hickman (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991) refer to specific roles of parents in relation to their children's education: (a) Parents as an audience, (b) Parents as learners, (c) Parents as educators, (d) Parents as volunteers or support staff, (e) Parents as decision makers.

Epstein (Epstein, 1995) describes six types of relationships between school and family. (a) Informing parents, (b) Frequent, two-way communication, (c) Voluntary work, (d) Learning at home, (e) Making joint decisions, (f) Working with the local community.

Martin, Ranson and Tall (Martin, Ranson & Tall, 1997) argue that the relationship between family and school is evolving through stages gradually in order to reach the desired level of mutual cooperation as follows: (a) The stage of dependence, (b) The stage of participation, (c) The stage of interaction, (d) The stage of cooperation.

E. Patrikakou & R. Weissberg (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1998) present a rather interesting framework for the development of relationships between school and family, which is based on seven parameters (The seven P's of School Family Partnerships): (a) The Partnership as a Priority, (b) Planned Efforts, (c) Proactive and Persistent Communication, (d) Positive, (e) The personal nature of collaboration and communication, (f) Practical Suggestions and (g) Program Monitoring.

Vincent (Vincent, 2000) suggests four (4) types of parental "positions" that describe their relationship with the educational context. (a) Independence, (b) Customer relationship, (c) Support / learning, (d) Participation.

Parental involvement according to Georgiou (Georgiou, 2000) is divided into the following categories: (a) control of school behavior (b) supervision of extracurricular behavior, (c) help with homework (d) cultivation of interests, (e) physical presence at school.

Overstreet, Bevans, Devine, & Efreom (Overstreet, Bevans, Devine, & Efreom, 2005) categorized parental involvement into three categories: school involvement, cognitive involvement, and personal involvement.

Matsagouras (Matsagouras, 2008) proposes four distinct models that reflect the different content of the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers in the child's learning. (a) The school-centered model, (b) The collaborative model, (c) The negotiating model, (d) The family-centered model.

According to Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (Larocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011), three types of parental involvement are identified: parent-centered involvement, school-centered involvement, and finally involvement focusing on the collaboration between school and family.

4. Relationship Models

Relationship models are mental constructions or representations of a communication system, in order to describe, explain and predict the development of events or phenomena. The main models are listed as follows.

Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) is based on the systemic approach. Its basic principle is the view that the individual throughout his life participates in many different systems which are in constant interaction and interdependence and affect his development. (a) The microsystems, which are the immediate environment of the child, such as family, school and neighborhood. (b) The intersystem, a system of relationships / interactions between microsystems (c) The extrasystem, which includes government and professional bodies, technology, mass media and social organizations. (d) The macro system, which concerns the political system, the legislation, the social and cultural values and the economic policy of the country. (e) The time system, which represents the time component of the subsystems. The recognition of the contribution of the biological parameter (eg the role of genes, neurological development, chromosomal abnormalities) as crucial in the development of the individual led to the model being renamed bio-ecosystem (Berk, 1993).

The Global model or model of overlapping spheres of influence of Epstein (Epstein, 1995) has a clear systemic orientation and expands the form of school-family cooperation, recognizing the role of the community. In particular, he argues that students learn and evolve within three broader contexts (family, school, community), which need to coexist functionally. The three spheres approach or move away depending on the age of the child, the attitude of the teachers and the degree of awareness of the community on issues of parental involvement in the educational process.

Ryan and Adams's Model of Family-School Relationships (Ryan & Adams, 1995), also systematically oriented, focuses on the child-student and the members of his immediate family environment, their interpersonal relationships and the impact they have on his success both in the school and in the social context in which he operates. Relationship systems and parameters, depending on the proximity that they have to the child's behavior and performance at school, are classified into six levels, with the child placed at the base.

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of Parental Involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995)

focuses on psychological parameters that concern parents and influence the relationships they develop with the school and consists of five levels: The first level includes the factors that motivate parents to engage in their children's education, the second level includes the parents' perceptions of the mechanisms of parental involvement, the third level describes the children's perceptions of the mechanisms of parental involvement, the fourth level describes, according to the children's perceptions, the students' qualities that lead to better performance, the fifth level includes the performance of students in various cognitive subjects.

The model of the influences and consequences of parental involvement in school (Eccles & Harold, 1996) emphasizes the need for a theoretical framework that, on the one hand, guides the effort to investigate effective parental involvement and, on the other hand, highlights the broader way in which both the school and the family influence the children's school performance.

The Model of inclusive education (Mylonakou-Keke, 2009) proposes a new functional model of education, which enriches the existing socio-pedagogical practices of adult and child education with methods, practices and procedures derived from formal, informal and non-formal education. Organizing inclusive activities around a thematic unit that meets the needs and interests of the participants can lead to a change in their attitudes and behaviors so that they move from a non-participating situation to an active participation that organizes and develops knowledge.

In conclusion, the above models, although they adopt different scientific orientations, contribute to a better understanding of the processes and parameters that affect the cooperation between school, family and community. Therefore, they can complement each other in regard to designing and implementing a successful educational policy on the collaboration between school, family and community.

5. Necessity - Benefits

Parents play a key role in the school institution and positively influence students, teachers and the educational environment in general (Papagiannidou, 2000).

In education, it has been proven that the cooperation between school and family contributes to the prevention of problematic behaviors of students (Brouzos, 2002), to the increase in the focus of attention in the lesson, to the improvement of school performance / success of students and the school climate. Parental involvement has been linked to both students' language development and enhancement of their socialization. At the same time, there is a profound correlation between the degree of parental involvement in school and the social, emotional and academic development of children (Kondakou, 2019).

Scientific research actively refers to the positive results of parental involvement for teachers as well. Teachers develop a deeper understanding of students and their families. Thanks to a more complete understanding of the needs of students and parents, teachers adapt the curriculum to the needs of the student. At the same time, parental involvement strengthens the morale of teachers and improves the efficiency of their work (Kondakou, 2019).

Strong school-family ties are also associated with enhanced parental self-confidence and self-sufficiency as well as with parents' involvement in their personal education/reeducation (Symeou, 2003). Cooperation between family and school is a necessary condition for parents and teachers' stronger collective effort to highlight and strengthen the students' abilities and more effectively deal with problems at school and at home (Tsimpidaki, 2007). It is in this collaborative framework that the reduction of the stress level of those involved in the educational process is achieved (Kondakou, 2019).

Finally, enhanced school-family relationships are proposed as one of the factors that determine the effectiveness of the school unit (Symeou, 2003).

6. Limitations – Cooperation difficulties

Factors affecting the parent: (a) The sex of the parents. Within the family itself, mothers appear to be more involved in issues related to children's school life (Hornby, 2011). However, it is observed that the change to the features of the modern family structure leads to an engagement with increased paternal participation (Symeou, 2003). (b) The socio-economic status and level of education of the parents. Parents with a higher level of education are more involved in school activities than parents whose level of education is lower (Tsetsos, 2015). (c) The structure of the family. Mothers from single-parent or large families are involved to a lesser extent compared to mothers from nuclear families (Christoforaki, 2011; Kirkigianni, 2012). (d) The psychological factors of the parents. These factors may be related either to the cultural / educational / linguistic differences identified between teachers and parents or to traumas or negative emotions experienced by parents during their school years (Georgiou, 2000; Kirkigianni, 2012). (e) Parents' expectations and attitudes. Parents who have a favorable attitude towards knowledge have high expectations of the future development of their children and, therefore, they maintain regular contact with teachers. (Georgiou, 2000; Kirkigianni, 2012).

It should be noted that the benefits appear only when parents are "informed, knowledgeable, encouraging and involved" (Epstein, 1992), taking into account that the comparison should be made intra-class (of similar socio-economic status) and between children of similar ability (Symeou, 2003).

Factors affecting the student: (a) The sex of the child. The involvement of parents who have boys is higher due to the prevalent perception that they are less responsible compared to girls in terms of consistently fulfilling their school obligations. (b) The age of the child and the class of study. It is common for engagement to decrease as the student progresses through school. (c) The school performance of the student. If the parent finds that his child is performing well in school, he reduces his personal involvement and vice versa (Georgiou, 2000). However, parents of children with learning disabilities or inherent disabilities tend to increase their involvement running the risk of coming into conflict with professional educators (Hornby, 2011). (d) The desire expressed by the child for parental involvement. This involvement may be related to some assistance with a school assignment or to intervention in a problem of school life (Kondakou, 2019).

Factors influencing school representatives: (a) The policy set by the principal as the orchestrator of the school climate and as the person in charge of managing parental involvement. The principal is the link between parents and teachers and the way school policy is managed ("open" or "closed" school) increases or decreases involvement (Georgiou, 2011; Kirkigianni, 2012). (b) The attitude of teachers and the practices they follow. Teachers who feel effective and are experienced in issues of parental involvement are more likely to plan and coordinate engagement actions (Christoforaki, 2011; Kirkigianni, 2012).

7. Role of School and Teachers

In the face of previous barriers to cooperation, parents often have a reasonable requirement from the school to take initiatives and open its gates to the path of participation. (Christoforaki, 2011; Kirkigianni, 2012; Tsetsos, 2015).

The school and the teachers who belong to it significantly influence any form of cooperation between the school, the family and the community. The socio-pedagogical role can only be supported by two types of school (Mylonakou-Keke, 2017): (a) The 'open to the family' school: In this context, all families can realistically and effectively help in many aspects of school life and contribute with their remarkable ideas to the effort to improve the operation of the school. Opportunities are created for families to have a systematic two-way communication with the school. (b) The school that is oriented towards cooperation with the family and the community: The main goal is the synergy between school, family and community the school's vision of the education of children is developed collectively, high quality standards are created for the learning process (in the broadest sense) and encouragement and systematic help is provided to all children, in order for them to constantly evolve and improve.

Numerous contemporary, empirical researches and bibliographies show that educators can support and improve cooperation between school and family. The most important principles for more effective family-school cooperation (Sakellariou, 2008) are the following: (a) The effective cooperation between educators and the family need to be based on prevention rather than on intervention and address all the families and not just the families with apparent school difficulties. (b) Effective school-family cooperation should recognize and value the significant contribution of parents regardless of their educational level. (c) Effective school-family cooperation based on mutual respect and trust promotes parental empowerment through positive, constructive, two-way family-school communication.

In particular, in order to create the conditions that will promote honest communication, the teacher is called upon to adopt specific characteristics and utilize basic skills, which are described in the anthropocentric theory of C. Rogers (Bruzos, 2009). Effective communication can be achieved when the teacher's attitude is characterized by: (a) Empathy, in which the listener has the ability to "enter" the speaker's position and understand his feelings and thoughts as accurately as possible without losing touch with himself (Bruzos, 2004). Empathy is realized through active listening and understanding of both the verbal and non-verbal messages of the other (Malikiosi-Loizou, 2008). (b) Unconditional acceptance, which is based on the principle that the individual is a unique and distinct entity who has a right to respect, without the intention of evaluating or criticizing his feelings or beliefs. (c) Authenticity, which expresses the agreement and harmony of thoughts and feelings, experience and attitude of the listener during communication. (Bruzos, 2004).

8. Summarizing

It is considered important to mention that in the multicultural societies we experience today, the essential and reciprocal relationship between the teacher and the family is as necessary as ever. School and family goals should be common, but their roles should be distinct and delimited. In fact, this demarcation of roles, terms and boundaries needs to be done through school-family negotiation processes. Teachers and parents need to understand that their roles may be different, but they allow each side to cumulatively contribute to the

development, learning and development of children (Evangelou, 2017). Cooperation at all levels between the two social institutions is now emerging as a new institution, in which each school / educational community lays the foundations and conditions for its successful operation.

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